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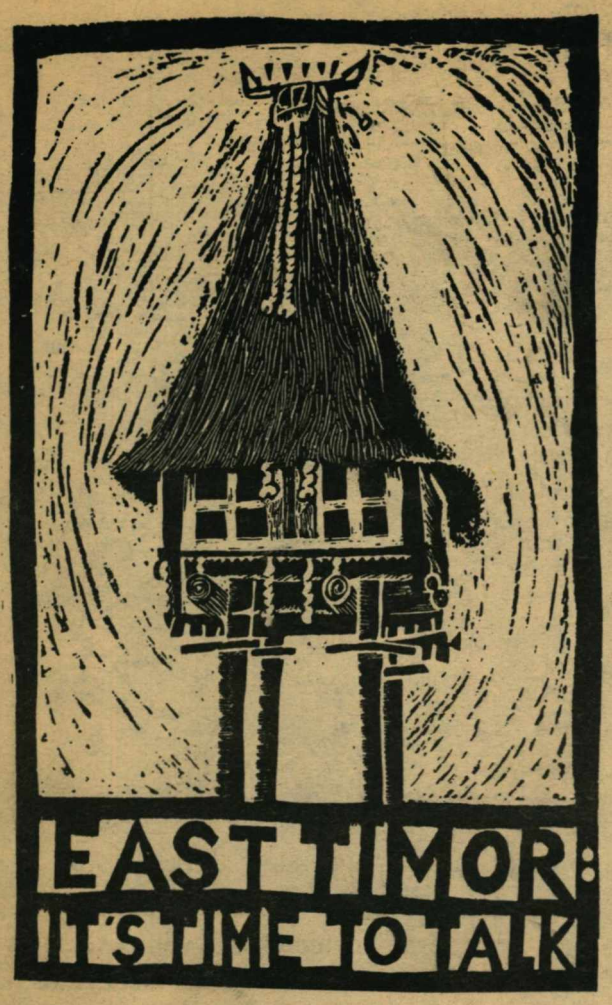

In 1975, Indonesia invaded and annexed East Timor, a former Portuguese colony about 600 kilometers north of Darwin. An estimated one third of the population was either killed during the invasion or by war induced famine and disease in the following years. The East Timorese people have nevertheless maintained their resistance to Indonesian occupation, and through their military leader Xanana Gusmoa and representatives of the Catholic Church, have repeatedly called for UN sponsored dialogue to resolve the conflict. They look to Namibia, Western Sahara and Cambodia as models upon which the resolution of their own struggle for self determination can be based.

The East Timorese call for Roundtable Talks has been taken up in Australia by the Australian Council For Overseas Aid and the East Timor Talks Campaign. The Australian Government is promoting similar initiatives in Cambodia and Tibet: why not, we ask, in East Timor too?

STORY SO FAR

Fade in to clear water lapping tropical sand. On the horizon a Portuguese ship lumbering towards conquest - and this island's sandlewood. From the beach, from the mountains, a people watch: soon they will begin their long struggle for self-determination.

Years roll by. Ships come and go. Soldiers, administrators, priests. With their swords, their cross, they crush all rebellion.

Centuries pass. One century, two centuries, three centuries, four. Monarchs crowned and uncrowned; dictators seize power and lose it; economies boom and bust; ideologies are born and die; governments elected, overthrown; wars lost and won; colonial powers wax and wane. Old patterns repeated, old maps redrawn. Unresolved issues from one era erupt violently in the next. Always the decisions that affect this people's destiny are made far beyond their territory's shores.

Now Germany invades Poland, Japan takes Singapore. The island, the archipelago, becomes a battlefield. Parachutes drift from the sky. Landing craft hug the coast. Men fight. The capital of this tiny colony is bombed beyond recognition. Soon Hiroshima, Nagasaki.

Forty thousand of the colony's people die in this war. Foreigners leave knowing they owe *their* lives to indigenous sacrifice.

Across the seas, yet another new world order. Washington; London; Moscow; Paris. San Francisco; New York. Old empires are dismantled; new ones emerge.

Across the archipelago, the Dutch flee their East Indies. A red and white flag unfurls over 13,000 islands. Prologue to an ancient drama: putsch then purges. Guns of liberation become weapons of repression. Right against Left. Up to a million die. Yet another State ideology writ in blood. *Pancasila.*

On our island territory, in the seminaries, the colleges, a fresh breeze rustles the pages of colonial texts. Behind closed doors, a new generation whispers freedom. But in the motherland a despot; imperial machismo still rules.

Meu Deus, what is this? Barricades in the streets of Lisbon! Tanks. The fascist regime is falling. April 1974. A liberal democracy grows from the barrels of young soldiers guns, from the hopes of the Portuguese people. The word now is - *decolonisation*. In contemporary vernacular, it means "this colony's costing too much, let's shed it real quick." Constitution drafted, independence promised, election date set - but with smallprint. In secret places, men from Lisbon meet men from Jakarta. They dictate the smallprint hush-hush. In Bahasa it reads .... *annexation*.

"Only on this island territory, do people trust. They stretch now, reach into their memories. Retrieve their identity, their pride. Listen to their ancestors, hear their songs. Learn Maubere consciousness, speak liberation."

POLARISED SEVENTIES

For little peoples everywhere, this is an unfriendly decade. It is the seventies after all, and the world is polarised. East and West. North and South. Aligned, non-Aligned. Saigon is about to "fall." And in every language, foreign policy speaks with forked tongue. Only on this island territory, do people trust. They stretch now, reach into their memories. Retrieve their identity, their pride. Listen to their ancestors, hear their songs. Learn Maubere consciousness, speak liberation. Organise political parties, prepare for elections. Establish schools, clinics. Look to their neighbours - for resources, models, support. Wait. And watch.

Others watch too, but long distance. Foreign ministers, ambassadors, generals. The international big brass. *We will see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil* they recite with one voice. *So long as our best interest is served.*

They watch from **Jakarta**. Of course we will not invade, the Foreign Minister says. And yes, of course every country has a right to self determination.

They watch from **Canberra**. If this territory becomes independent, it will be "unviable", a "potential threat to the area" the Prime Minister says. Another Cuba. Dominos might fall. (In dispatches though, the word is ..... oil.)

From **London** they watch. "It is in Britain's interest that Indonesia should absorb the territory as soon and as unobtrusively as possible," the Ambassador says. "If it comes to the crunch and there is a row in the United Nations, we should keep our heads down and avoid siding against the Indonesians."

And from **Washington**. The US Ambassador to Jakarta just hopes that if the Indonesians intervene, they will do so "effectively, quickly and not use our equipment." (A nod's as good as a wink.)

On the island colony - what to do? What is in *our* best interest a people ask? Opinions diverge. Families are divided. Sibling agin sibling; father, mother agin offspring. Threats, counter threats. One political party boycotts the "decolonisation" process, insists on full and immediate independence. Challenges the smallprint. Volleys of propaganda into villages, towns. The valleys, mountains shudder. The airwaves tremble. August 1975. An attempted coup. Blood flows. The Portuguese administrators flee. The colonial garrison joins the struggle. Fifteen hundred, perhaps three thousand people die. Soon fragile peace, a de facto government.

Then one day, from the verandah of the old Governor's residence, a new nation state is proclaimed: the Democratic Republic of East Timor. November 28, 1975. At last an indigenous flag over Dili.

INVASION

Alas, this flag brings no sovereignty. In Lisbon, Washington, Canberra it is ignored. "... the solution to the Timor problem is now in the front line of battle," Jakarta says. The US President, his Secretary of State visit. As they leave,

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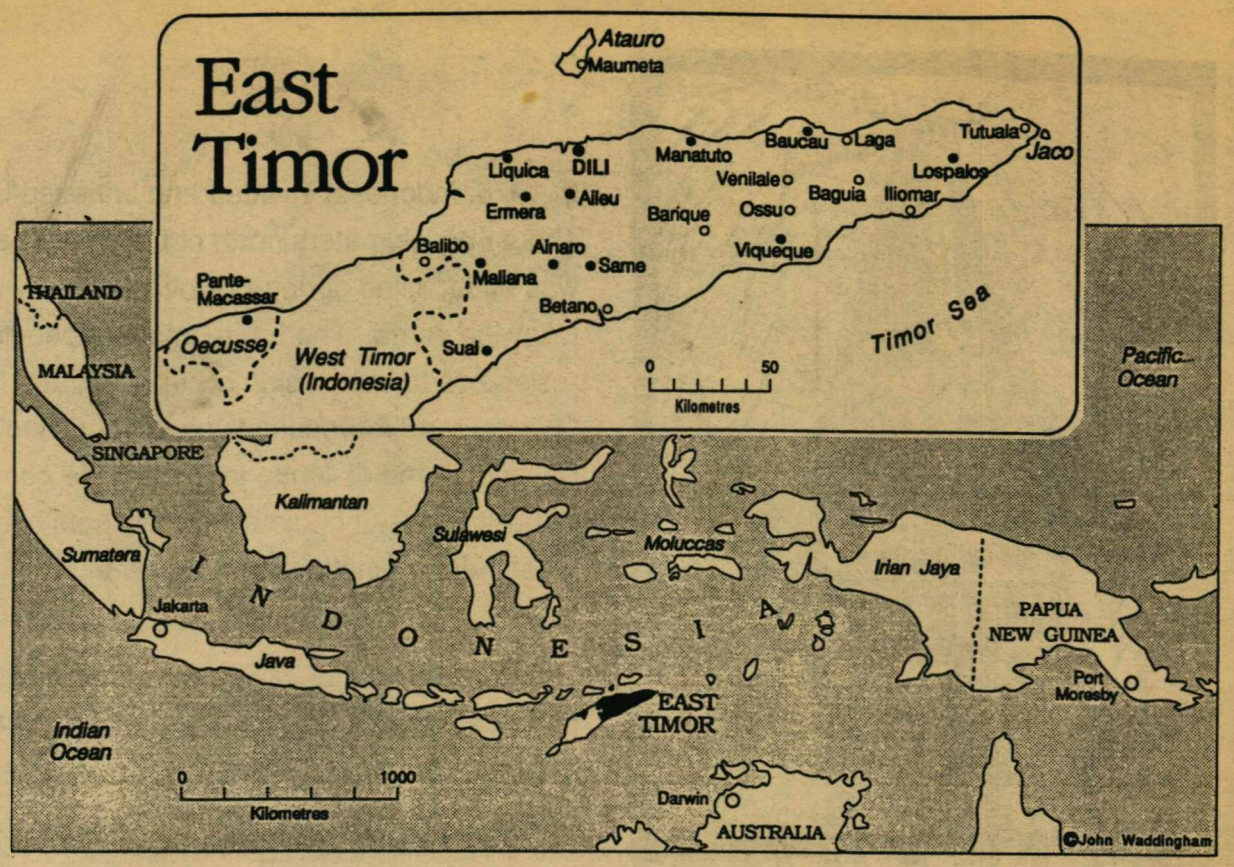
"Again parachutes, landing craft, columns of men. Again blood in the gutters, screams in the air. Villages disappear. Mountains, valleys defoliate. Forty, sixty, eighty thousand people die. Then famine. Repression. One hundred maybe two hundred thousand more take a lingering path to the Mountain of the Dead. The forests weep. Aid workers remember Biafra, Kampuchea. .... Again East Timor is an occupied territory"



the order is given. December 7, 1975. This still innocent little republic is invaded before even it reaches Statehood.

Again parachutes, landing craft, columns of men. Again blood in the gutters, screams in the air. Villages disappear. Mountains, valleys defoliate. Forty, sixty, eighty thousand people die. Then famine. Repression. One hundred maybe two hundred thousand more take a lingering path to the Mountain of the Dead. The forests weep. Aid workers remember Biafra, Kampuchea. "It was war .... Then what's the big fuss?" says Jakarta. Again East Timor is an occupied territory. The red and white flag now neocolonial.

INTERNATIONAL PROTEST

Sure there is international protest. Sure the General Assembly votes. Sure it "strongly deplores the military intervention of the armed forces of Indonesia....." Asks "all States to respect the unity and territorial integrity of Portuguese Timor." Then silence.

Sure there's a Security Council resolution. Unanimous. Indonesia should "withdraw without delay all its forces from the Territory." The General Secretary should "urgently send a special representative to East Timor for the purpose of making an on-the-spot assessment of the existing situation and of establishing contact with all parties in the Territory and all States concerned in order to ensure the implementation of the present resolution." More silence. The big brass obstructs the "special representative", his "on-the-spot assessment." Indonesia wants to torpedo his frigate.

Each year the parade of token gestures. Each year the noble words. About "the inalienable right of all peoples to self determination..." About ".... independence in accordance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples ....."

But each year the silence grows louder. US State Department policy. (Desert Storm's still down the highway; General Schwatzkopff's still learning his lines.)

"We regard Indonesia as a friendly non-aligned nation, a nation we do a lot of business with," the Department salesman says. Like the US Ambassador to the UN recalls: "The Department of State desired that the UN prove utterly ineffective in whatever measures it undertook. This task was given to me and I carried it forward with no inconsiderable success."

SILENT EIGHTIES

All through the eighties the silence howls. The "last nail in the coffin" the generals claim. In New York, it's discussion deferred, UN jargon replayed: "comprehensive settlement," "negotiations," "talks." Under "the good offices" of the Secretary General. But only in Officialese. Only Bahasa, Portuguese. Never "all parties to the conflict." Never really serious.

In East Timor, a new script. History rewrit. About how Indonesia was *invited*. How integration was *requested*. How East Timor is the 27th province. How the resistance has "ceased to exist." The generals sound convincing. Smile Colgate Palmolive; shoot Uzi, M16, Scorpion, Stalin organ, AMX, Bronco, Allouette. Civilian life under Special Military Command. They bring in transmigrants, redistribute land; re-organise villages, standardise them. Oh no, not like concentration camps. Not about control. About ah, making "administration" easier, about facilitating "development".

It *must* be true. Mustn't it? I mean, the President signed the Bill into law in '76. And - didn't the Timorese vote in the '82, '87 elections? The President's party got 94%. Oh no, no intimidation.

Oldest profession in the world, re-inventing the past - to make the present fit. Repeat the story often enough ..... but people know. We know this new script doesn't work. Doesn't stop the bleeding, the tears. Doesn't stop the memories, the dreams. Doesn't stop the longing ..... the resistance.

HOPEFUL NINETIES

People know in **Washington**.

January 1990. The US Ambassador visits the island, talks with protesters. A riot. The world sees.

July 1991. The US Congress amends the Appropriations Bill.

It is the sense of the Congress.....that the administration should work with the United Nations and the governments of Indonesia, Portugal and other involved parties to develop policies to address the underlying causes of the conflict in East Timor.

In **Tokyo** people know..

The Japanese Prime Minister threatens to reduce or stop aid to countries with excessive military expenditure or are against democratisation. Japan's contribution to peace after the Gulf he says. Announces four criteria to determine allocation of Official Development Assistance: 1) military spending; 2) arms export and import; 3) possession or development of nuclear and biochemical weapons; and 4) the degree of democratisation. Indonesia is number one recipient of Japan's aid.

"We believe that if these criteria are honestly applied to Indonesia ..... discussion on the issue of East Timor will be inevitable" says the Diet Members Forum on East Timor.

In **Brussels** people know.

June 28, 1991. Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly. Resolution 966 (1991).

Paragraph 9. The Assembly calls on Council of Europe member states to:

i. insist upon a political solution negotiated within the United Nations and involving Portugal, Indonesia and the East Timorese people;

ii. urge countries which have economic links with Indonesia to bring pressure to bear on Indonesia to halt all violation of human rights and ali appropriation of East Timor's natural resources and assets;

iii. support food and health aid to the East

THE MISSING PEACE

An exhibition by three women photographers

Linden Gallery, 26 Acland Street St Kilda
October 30 to November 10 1991
Gallery hours Wed-Sun 1-6 pm

Elaine Briere - *Life,before the invasion 1974*
Mel Sylvester - *Build up to Indon invasion 1975*
Jenny Groves - *Resistance and protest 1990*

with soundscape by **Sound Design Studio**, video by **Mandy King** and **James Kesteven** and banners by **Another Planet Posters.**

EXHIBITION OPENING

SUNDAY OCT. 27, 1991

with
Emilia Gusmao representing her husband Xanana Gusmao, leader of the East Timorese Resistance;
Rev. John Mavor, President ACFOA;
Dr Jocelynne Scutt, feminist barrister; and
Garrie Gibson, Federal Member for Moreton.

The East Timor Talks Campaign, ACFOA Human Rights Office, 124 Napier Street, Fitzroy, 3065. Ph. 03 4177 505

"Listen now, it is we the people calling. In this decade, even the big brass can hear. And about East Timor? Well - this is the story so far. It doesn't finish yet. It goes on - like Namibia, Western Sahara, Cambodia, the Baltic States. It ends in peace, justice. In people power, democracy. Not an ending really but a beginning - just waiting to be made real. The nineties are East Timor's years."

Photo: *Los Pallos, Lost Timor, 1974. By Elaine Briere. From the exhibition The Missing Peace.*

Timorese people;

iv. implement an arms embargo in respect of Indonesia .....

In the **Vatican** people know.

October 1989. "At times nations are tempted to disregard fundamental human rights in a misguided search for political unity based on military or economic power alone. But such unity can be easily dissolved," Pope John Paul II warns his Indonesian hosts. *Timor Leste, Timor Leste* people cry at his mass in Dili. Arrests, beatings. Again the world sees.

Even in **Jakarta** people know.

September 1991. A magazine reports on Timorese protests in Jakarta. The editor gets a message, publishes a blank space instead. Everyone knows. ".... politically conscious Indonesians are now aware, as never before, that the nationalism of the East Timorese is a reality that won't go away," says a prominent Indonesianist.

In **Lisbon** do people know?

Sim, sim, sim. By its very constitution, Portugal is pledged to "promote and guarantee the right of the people of Timor to self-determination and independence." Article 297. Yes, in Lisbon, people know. A matter of national pride, political honour. Of rediscovered responsibility. This is the nineteen nineties. Time in Lisbon to resolve four hundred years. Time to challenge those who disregard international law.

And in **Canberra?** Oh, oil on troubled waters. February 1991. "The circumstances in which Indonesia acquired East Timor did not mean Australia was legally obliged not to recognise Indonesian sovereignty over the territory," the Foreign Minister says. For in Canberra there's a Gap - in the national conscience, between ministers' ears. Canberra wants to *de jure* the past; covets crude riches bequeathed to East Timor by geological time. Alas dear Gareth, that submarine oil smudges your view across the Timor Sea. Drills a Gap in your foreign policy.

Bali. Joint Ministerial Council about a "Zone of Cooperation", about sharing the oil. "We simply cannot lend ourselves to an exercise" quote "which is premised on non-acceptance of the sovereign incorporation of East Timor into the Republic of Indonesia," he says. It is "irreversible". There can be no change in the "basic constitutional arrangements that presently exist."

PRELUDE TO PEACE

"Irreversible"? No change? Tell Western Sahara that. Namibia, Eritrea. Tell the Soviet Republics, the Baltic States. Tell Cambodia, Palestine; Croatia, Quebec. Tell Northern Ireland, Bougainville. Tell Kuwait, Tibet. Tell them the situation is "irreversible". That things cannot change. Then tell East Timor, shout it across that Gap.

Tell the children growing up. Tell the students throwing stones. Tell the mothers smuggling food. Tell the fathers stealing guns. Tell the rivers running blood. Tell the priests, tell the nuns. Tell the mountains, tell the valleys. Tell the forests, tell the trees. Tell the political parties, tell the refugees. Tell the prisoners, tell the disappeared. Tell the fighters, tell the clandestine. That the situation is "irreversible." That things cannot change.

Repeat the story often enough ..... But people know. We know the present is not all there is. We see, we hear.

From the Cathedral, **Bishop Belo**: *If we respect truth and justice, for me, there is no other way but to give the possibility to all the East Timorese to express their ideas and desires to whom they should belong without pressure and without force.* We see, we hear.

From the mountains, **Xanana Gusmao**: *The Maubere people will never cease to resist while there is life to carry on with the struggle hoping that one day we will achieve peace for East Timor. Peace is possible for East Timor. Dialogue is a way out for peace. A referendum will open up perspectives for a resolution and a just solution.*

And: *We are prepared to discuss all issues which will lead to the solution of the problem. We*

WE NEED YOUR HELP

If you are touched by East Timor's story,
please take at least one small personal action to help resolve the conflict in this troubled territory.

YOU CAN DO THIS BY:

• **writing letters** about East Timor to Prime Minister Hawke, your local politicians and to newspapers;
• asking **"difficult" but informed questions** about East Timor
whenever there's an "expert" or politician around - especially if it's **Minister for Foreign Affairs** Gareth Evans,
or the **Prime Minister** or the **Indonesian Ambassador**;
• encouraging organisations and institutions you are involved with to **research the issue**
and **develop appropriate policies - then act on them**;
• writing **magazine, journal or newsletter articles** about East Timor;
• raising East Timor on **talkback radio**;
• discussing East Timor with your **friends and colleagues** - talking about it at school, uni,
the church, mosque or temple, or at the pub, the hairdressers, at the kitchen table,
at your favourite cafe or restaurant, fastfood joint or supermarket;
• making a **donation** to the East Timor Talks Campaign, 124 Napier Street, Fitzroy, Vic. 3065;
• and by **affirming the right of the East Timorese people to have a say in their own future.**

The East Timor Talks Campaign, ACFOA Human Rights Office, 124 Napier Street, Fitzroy, 3065. Ph. 03 4177 505

are trusting the UN General Secretary to convene a meeting of all parties concerned.

And: *Armed aggression brought the same results to both East Timor and to Kuwait. It was forced annexation and establishment of an oppressive government by the aggressor country. It is most deplorable that when international censure of the Iraqi aggression of Kuwait has reached such heights, what is happening to us in East Timor has been forgotten. 'Principles' are often interpreted in terms of the interests of the countries concerned. But if they are universal in the slightest degree, I believe that the principle should be applied equally, whether the country is large or small, rich or poor.* We see, we hear.

From the streets, the simple words of a Timorese student: *We are not afraid. If we are killed for our country, it doesn't matter.*

In Australia, we see, we hear. We remember. It was our planes bombed Dili in '42. We acknowledge a debt to repay. Acknowledge a Gap to fill. We know that in life, some things *are* "irreversible". Like the dream of peace, of justice, of self-determination. But we know that in politics, nothing is. We want change. Not political expediency but peace through dialogue. A just settlement to the conflict in East Timor.

UN SPONSORED DIALOGUE

First step: dialogue. Round table talks. Without preconditions. UN resolution 3485 (XXX). All parties. Indonesians, Portuguese, East Timorese. Ceasefire, negotiations. UN to sponsor. Role for the church, for ASEAN. Referendum. UN monitored act of self-determination. Like Namibia, Western Sahara. Like Cambodia.

First step. Talks. About options maybe. About practical things. The who and how, the what, why and when sorts of things. Like who treats the sick, who teaches the kids. Who maintains roads, who constructs houses. Who controls shipping, who regulates airspace. Who digs the wells, who lays the pipes. Who builds the factories, who works the fields. Who manufactures the goods, who processes food. Who cuts the forests, who dams the streams. Who exploits minerals, who drills for oil. Who collects taxes, who generates wealth. Who keeps the profit, who pays the bills. Who defines policy, who makes it happen. Who administers justice, who monitors rights. Who defends security, who plays police. Who does the census, who defines suffrage. Who staffs the booths, who counts the votes.

Just talks. About the making the beds sort of things, the cleaning the floor. The who gives who takes sort of things, who opens/who closes the doors. Just talks, just options. With nothing "irreversible" - except the need for change.

Listen now, it is we the people calling. In this decade, even the big brass can hear. And about East Timor? Well - this is the story so far. It doesn't finish yet. It goes on like Namibia, Western Sahara, Cambodia, the Baltic States. It ends in peace, justice. In people power, democracy. Not an ending really but a beginning - just waiting to be made real. The nineties are East Timor's years.•

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Merrill Findlay is a Melbourne based writer. She represented ACFOA (Australian Council for Overseas Aid) at the UN Decolonisation Committee hearings on East Timor in New York, August 1991 and convened the Hanoin Rai Timor Symposium in Melbourne, December 1990. She has also been closely associated with Eritrea and is a consultant to the Australian Conservation Foundation.

Her article *East Timor: The Story So Far* may be reprinted in full or photocopied without permission. Please negotiate any cuts or proposed alterations by contacting the author through the East Timor Talks Campaign on 03 417 7505 or by phoning 03 534 6999.

References for all historical information and direct quotations used or alluded to in *The Story So Far* are available from the author.

WASHINGTON AND BRUSSELS

AMENDMENT TO THE US APPROPRIATIONS BILL July 1991

It is the sense of Congess that:

1) the President should urge the Government of Indonesia to take action to end all forms of human rights violations in East Timor and to permit full freedom of expression in East Timor;

2) the President should encourage the Government of Indonesia to facilitate the world of international human rights organisations and other groups to monitor human rights conditions in East Timor and to cooperate with international humanitarian relief and development organisations seeking to work in East Timor; and

3) that the administration should work with the United Nations and the governments of Indonesia, Portugal and other involved parties to develop policies to address the underlying causes of the conflict in East Timor.

COUNCIL OF EUROPE PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY Resolution 966 (1991)

Paragraph 4. The Assembly condemns the annexation of East Timor by Indonesia, which it regards as a violation of international law and more particularly of peoples' right to self-determination and independence.

Paragraph 5. It likewise condemns the continual grave violations of human rights which the Indonesian occupying forces have inflicted on the people of East Timor and it affirms the right of the Timorese people to decide their own political destiny and preserve, develop and assert their cultural, linguistic and religious identity.

Paragraph 7. It endorses the mediation endeavours of the Secretary General of the United Nations and encourages parliamentary and other initiatives aimed at enforcing the United Nations resolutions.

Paragraph 8. The Assembly demands that the Indonesian government:

i. ends all violations of international instruments establishing human rights and peoples' right to self determination and independence;

ii. opens East Timor's borders and allows the international aid and human rights organisations ..... to carry on their work there;

iii. orders an immediate cease-fire with the Timor resistance forces, withdraws its armed forces from East Timor and creates the political preconditions for free exercise of self-determination.

Paragraph 9. Lastly, the Assembly calls on Council of Europe member states to:

i. insist upon a political solution negotiated within the United Nations and involving Portugal, Indonesia and the East Timorese people;

ii. urge countries which have economic links with Indonesia to bring pressure to bear on Indonesia to halt all violation of human rights and all appropriation of East Timor's natural resources and assets;

iii. support food and health aid to the East Timorese people;

iv. implement an arms embargo in respect of Indonesia until the objectives set out in paragraph 8 have been achieved.

AND CANBERRA?

The Australian Government claims East Timor is the 27th Province of Indonesia. That there is "no problem" there. This view is *not* "irreversible."

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October 1991
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Desktop layout and design by Merrill Findlay.

WE NEED YOUR HELP, YOUR ACTIVE SUPPORT
TO GET EAST TIMOR BACK ON THE PUBLIC AGENDA

Photo: *Child, Lost Timor, 1974. Elaine Briere.*

So that this story indeed goes on like Namibia, Eritrea, Western Sahara, Cambodia, the Baltic States, Kuwait.
So that this story really *does* end "in peace, in justice. In people power, democracy."
"Not an ending really but a beginning - just waiting to be made real."

Please send me more information about the East Timor Talks Campaign
I will help by .....
My name is .....
Address ..... Phone .....
Please see my enclosed donation of $.....

GRAB A PEN, FILL THIS COUPON IN, AND MAIL IT TO:
East Timor Talks Campaign, ACFOA Human Rights Office.
124 Napier Street, Fitzroy, Victoria. Ph. (03) 417 7505. Fax. (03) 416 2746